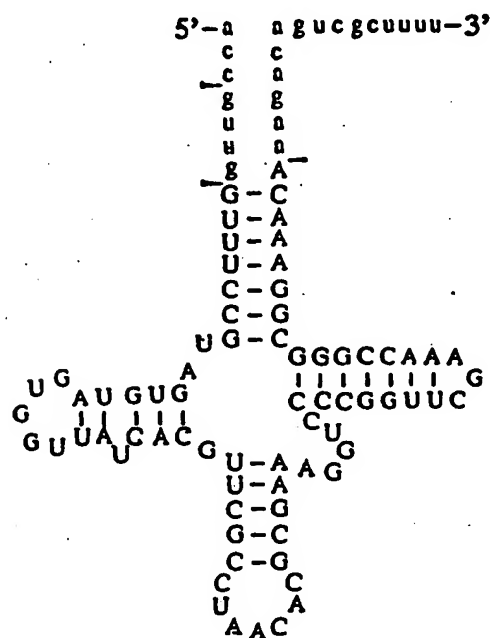


**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claims 1-7. (Cancelled.)

8. (Currently Amended) An RNA variant adopting the following secondary structure (I), wherein said RNA variant comprises a bulge structure introduced in the region in which hydrogen bonds form between nucleotides 8 to 14 and nucleotides 73 to 79.



(I)

SEQ ID No. 4

9. (Original) The RNA variant according to claim 8 comprising a bulge structure which is introduced by substituting all or part of the sequence of the region of

nucleotides 73 to 79 within the nucleotide sequence of an RNA adopting secondary structure (I).

Claims 10-11. (Cancelled.)

12. (Original) An RNA comprising the RNA variant according claim 8 and a selected RNA chain linked thereto.

13. (Original) The RNA according to claim 12 wherein said selected RNA chain is a ribozyme or an antisense RNA.

14. (Original) The RNA according to claim 12 wherein a bulge structure is formed with any nucleotide of an RNA chain linked to the 3' terminus and any nucleotide of the region of nucleotides 8 to 14 within the nucleotide sequence of an RNA adopting secondary structure (I).

15. (Currently Amended) An expression vector comprising DNA encoding the RNA ~~according to claim 12~~ variant of claim 8.